

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 NOUAKC 00961 081006Z
ACTION NEA-10

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FM AMEMBASSY NOUAKCHOTT
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 9312
INFO AMEMBASSY ALGIERS
AMEMBASSY DAKAR
AMEMBASSY MADRID
AMEMBASSY RABAT
AMEMBASSY PARIS

C O N F I D E N T I A L NOUAKCHOTT 961

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: MOPS, SOPN, MO, PINS, AG, MR,SS
SUBJ: MAURITANIAN DIPLOMAT'S DEFECTION FROM LAS PALMAS

REF: (A) ALGIERS 1046 (NOTAL, (B) RABAT 3839 (NOTAL)

1. BEGIN UNCLASSIFIED: ACCORDING TO MAURITANIAN GOVERNMENT (GIRM) OFFICIALS, MAURITANIAN VICE COUNSUL IN LAS PALMAS M'BARECK OULD BRAHIM SALEM FLED THE CANARY ISLANDS ON MARCH 12 FOR ALGIERS. ON APRIL 4 MAURITANIAN MINISTRY OF FOREIGN AFFAIRS CIRCULATED NOTE TO ALL DIPLOMATIC MISSIONS INFORMING THEM THAT M'BARECK'S DIPLOMATIC PASSPORT HAD BEEN WITHDRAWN (RETIRE). GIRM HAS NOT AND MOST LIKELY WILL NOT ISSUE STATEMENT ON M'BARECK'S DEPARTURE. END UNCLASSIFIED.

2. BEGIN CONFIDENTIAL. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL WHO WORKED WITH M'BARECK TOLD EMBOFF THAT DEPARTURE WAS SUDDEN, UNEXPECTED BUT NOT SHOCKING. HE DESCRIBED M'BARECK HAS SYMPATHETIC PRIVATE INDIVIDUAL, MARRIED AND IN HIS MID-THIRTEES. HE WAS EDUCATED IN SPAIN, NEITHER SPEAKS NOR WRITES FRENCH, SPEAKS ARABIC TO A LIMITED EXTENT, BUT DOES NOT WRITE ARABIC. HE JOURNEYED TO NOUAK-
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CHOTT FROM VILLA CISNEROS IN EARLY 1976, SHORTLY AFTER THE QUOTE REUNIFICATION QUOTE OF THE SOUTHERN SAHARA WITH MAURITANIA. AFTER A FEW MONTHS IN NOUAKCHOTT HE WAS ASSIGNED AS SECOND SECRETARY TO THE MAURITANIAN EMBASSY IN DAKAR IN SPETEMBER 1976 WHERE HE REMAINED UNTIL DECEMBER 1977. HE WAS REASSIGNED TO LAS PALMAS IN JANUARY 1978 AND ARRIVED THERE IN FEBRUARY 1978. FOREIGN MINISTRY OFFICIAL COULD NOT CONFIRM OR DENY THAT M'BARECK WAS

WORKING WITH POLISARIO, BUT NOTED THAT IT WAS A POSSIBILITY SINCE M'BARECK UNDOUBTEDLY HAS RELATIVES IN TINDOUF.

3. COMMENT: M'BARECK'S "DEFECTION" HAS BEEN WIDELY DISCUSSED ON THE NOUAKCHOTT ARAB TELEPHONE SYSTEM, I.E. THE LOCAL GRAPE-VINE. MOST OBSERVERS ARE NOT SURPRISED BY "DEFECTION" AND DO NOT CONSIDER IT AN IMPORTANT EVENT. WHETHER HE WAS A QUOTE SPY UNQUOTE OR NOT IS NOT CONSIDERED CENTRAL ISSUE SINCE IT WAS NOT REALLY POSSIBLE FOR SOMEONE SUCH AS M'BARECK TO HAVE FULLY SEVERED ALL HIS CONNECTIONS WITH HIS SAHARAN BROTHERS WHO HAVE JOURNEYED TO TINDOUF. WITH THE BENEFIT OF HINDSIGHT MANY SPECULATE ON THE ADVISABILITY OF HAVING ASSIGNED M'BARECK OVERSEAS SO SOON AFTER HIS ARRIVAL IN NOUAKCHOTT AND PARTICULARLY QUESTION HIS TRANSFER TO THE TWO-MAN CONSULATE IN LAS PALMAS. END CONFIDENTIAL.

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